



Michigan Department of Human Services

Child Welfare Philosophy

This philosophy serves as a guide for all DHS child welfare policy, contracting and payment approaches, inclusive of protective services, foster care, adoption, and juvenile justice.

SAFETY

Our first priority is to keep children safe. We recognize that parents (or other legal guardians) have primary responsibility for keeping their own children safe, but when they cannot or do not, we have been entrusted with the authority to intervene on behalf of the child.

CHILDREN'S NEEDS

Children must have a voice in decisions that affect them. We must consider the specific needs of each child as we make decisions on his or her behalf. Those decisions must reflect consideration of community, ethnic, and cultural values, and be free of bias.

FAMILIES' NEEDS

We must treat families with dignity and respect, recognize and value their ethnic and cultural traditions, and actively include them in decisions that affect them and their children. We must help families identify and use their existing strengths and we must consider family safety as we determine the intervention plan for a child. We must ensure that birth and adoptive families have access to at least the same level resources and services as those available to foster parents.

COMMUNITIES

We must actively partner with communities to protect children and support families. We must take into consideration community safety issues as we determine the intervention plan for a child and family.

PLACEMENT

The ideal place for children is in their own home with their own family. When we cannot ensure their safety in the family home we must place siblings together whenever possible and place them in the most family-like and least restrictive setting required to meet their unique needs, and we must strive to make the first placement the best and only placement. We must first consider placement with the non-custodial parent or extended family (maternal or paternal relatives, or appropriate non-relatives known and trusted by the child); if that is not possible or appropriate, we must strive to place the child with a foster or adoptive family so the child can stay in his or her school and maintain relationships with friends and family. When it is not possible or appropriate to place the child with siblings or relatives, we must make every effort to ensure that those relationships are maintained and fostered.

REUNIFICATION AND PERMANENCE

We must reunify children with their siblings and families as soon as safely possible. When reunification is not possible, we must provide children with a permanent home and/or a permanent connection with caring, supportive adults as soon as possible. We must also ensure that children under our care are connected with the resources necessary for physical and mental health, education, financial literacy, and employment; and that they acquire the life skills necessary to become successful adults.

SERVICES

When we intervene on behalf of children we must strive to leave children and families better off than if there had been no intervention. We must tailor services to meet the unique needs of each family member, and provide those services in a manner that is respectful of the child and family. Services should be outcome based, data-driven and continuously evaluated.